

**Solid Waste Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
Solid Waste Master Plan Review
November 4, 2004**

Update on Process and Goals for this Meeting

This was the last of three special SWAC meetings focused on soliciting input and recommendations from the group regarding the review and revision of the *Beyond 2000 Solid Waste Master Plan* (SWMP). This discussion will continue at the next regularly scheduled SWAC meeting on November 16, 2004.

DEP has not yet developed any proposals for revising the Master Plan at this time. DEP plans to develop an initial proposal for revising the Master Plan for discussion at the January 2005 SWAC meeting. DEP's schedule calls for issuing a draft plan for public comment and hearings in Spring 2005 and issuing a final revised plan by July 2005.

No Net Import/Export Policy and Capacity Need

- Participants agreed with the stated areas of agreement from the previous meeting with respect to the no net import/export policy and need for some form of increased in-state management capacity. Specifically, these points were:
 - Participants generally agreed that DEP should change the no net import/export policy to a long-term goal without a fixed date attached to it. It was suggested that it currently functions more like a goal than like a policy.
 - There also was general agreement that it is important to have some form of increased in-state management capacity to allow for more options to manage Massachusetts waste. This capacity could take the form of reducing waste generation, recycling or composting capacity, or transfer or disposal capacity.
 - Increased in-state management capacity would help to reduce waste management costs for municipalities and businesses.
- However, a participant added that since Massachusetts is such a small state it might be better for waste to be disposed at out-of-state facilities in more-suitable locations that pose fewer environmental and public health risks compared to locations in Massachusetts. In response, another participant stated that exporting waste increases diesel emissions from transporting the waste, and DEP should consider health risks from the diesel emissions when comparing in-state versus out-of-state disposal.

Increasing Waste Reduction, Recycling, and Composting

A number of participants urged DEP to aggressively pursue waste reduction, recycling, and composting as better alternatives to increased disposal capacity. These participants expressed support for increased DEP funding to implement the solid waste program and, in particular, recycling and waste reduction initiatives. Specific recommendations included:

- Increase DEP's budget from the Legislature for solid waste and recycling programs.
- Increase solid waste facility fees to cover the costs necessary to adequately implement the Master Plan policies.

- Make recycling mandatory for cities and towns. However, municipal representatives stated that they do not have the resources to implement such a mandate and that such a requirement would represent an unfunded mandate.
- Introduce and support legislation to make Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) mandatory for cities and towns. A suggested alternative, if funding allows, is to increase incentives for municipalities to implement PAYT.
- Increase Recycling Industry Reimbursement Credit grants, which have successfully leveraged substantial investments in recycling processing and manufacturing infrastructure.
- If funding allows, increase incentives for municipalities, such as the MRIP program and incentives like the state is looking at for smart growth.
- Increase recycling education.
- Work with the solid waste industry to explore new technologies such as aerobic digestion, anaerobic digestion, and plasma arc technologies that may provide viable, productive alternatives to current waste management approaches in Massachusetts.
- Pursue producer take-back programs.
- Tighten siting criteria for processing facilities (e.g., increase setbacks) to help get facilities sited in better areas.
- DEP should look more closely at potential programs and tools to reduce waste generation and should form a SWAC working group to develop proposed recommendations for reducing waste at the source.

Combustion Facility Moratorium

The discussion of the combustion facility moratorium began with presentations by Susan King, from the Integrated Waste Services Association and American Ref-Fuel, and John McNabb, from Clean Water Action, on each side of this issue. Susan provided DEP with a copy of her presentation, which is posted on DEP's web site with these meeting notes. The main points of Susan King's presentation were:

- Although the combustion facility moratorium was based on limiting disposal capacity and not on facility emissions, emissions have decreased dramatically since Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) retrofits have been installed.
 - Combustion facility emissions now represent less than 1 percent of the known dioxin inventory.
 - Combustion facility emissions now represent less than 3 percent of U.S. man-made mercury emissions.
- Both the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy have recognized combustion facilities as an important clean, renewable energy source.
- A life cycle assessment conducted for the California Integrated Waste Management Board compared various emissions and energy savings from different waste management processes, including several landfill scenarios, several recycling scenarios, waste-to-energy and other conversion technologies.
 - Waste-to-energy compared favorably with other waste management alternatives in terms of energy production and net emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides and greenhouse gases.

- A summary comparison of emissions from renewable energy sources - combustion facilities, biomass plants, and landfill gas – is included as well.
- Other benefits of combustion facilities in Massachusetts include:
 - 90 percent volume reduction of MSW
 - Metals recovery
 - Greater energy recovery than from landfill gas recovery
 - Mercury recovery programs (not required for landfills)

John McNabb gave a short presentation, followed by representatives from three local community groups that are opposed to lifting the moratorium. The main points from these presentations were:

- Energy conservation and other renewable energy sources are preferable to combustion.
- Combusting trash is a waste of materials compared with recycling, which turns waste into new products.
- The combustion facility moratorium should be based on both capacity and environmental issues.
- Even with significant progress in reducing mercury emissions, combustion facilities still emit 558 pounds of mercury per year, making them the largest in-state source. Ninety lakes and ponds in Massachusetts are listed as impaired water bodies, and DEP is required by EPA to assess the total maximum daily load limits for these water bodies. DEP should not allow any additional combustion facility capacity that would add more mercury to the environment.
- The emissions reductions have resulted in mercury and other chemicals being shifted from air emissions into ash, which increases concerns about contaminant levels in ash. DEP should take a closer look at ash testing levels. Local community members have extensive concerns and questions about ash contamination and how ash is managed.
- DEP should not look at combustion facility capacity as an alternative to recycling and instead should pursue a zero waste policy.
- A study conducted in Saugus by the local community indicates elevated levels of many illnesses and health problems. DEP should not add to the problem by allowing more combustion. DEP and/or the Department of Public Health (DPH) should study health issues within a certain radius of combustion facilities. However, requests to DPH for such studies have been denied due to a lack of resources. DEP should partner with local colleges and universities to study health issues and develop innovative ways to reduce and recycle waste.
- Combustion facilities cannot be considered cost-effective until the costs of health impacts are taken into account.

Other comments regarding lifting the combustion facility moratorium, in addition to the above presentations, included:

- Emissions from other nearby facilities, such as power plants and diesel emissions, need to be addressed along with combustion facility emissions.
- Landfills have unregulated mercury emissions; these emissions should be considered when comparing landfill disposal to combustion.

- One participant noted that it appears that health risks among combustion facility workers are not elevated, which suggests that localized risks from emissions are not significantly increased. However, another participant suggested that could be due to the fact that these workers have safety training, wear protective equipment, and may not live near the facility.
- A number of participants echoed concerns about toxicity levels of combustion facility ash. In response, it was pointed out that fly ash and bottom ash are typically mixed together, tested for toxicity leaching, and then landfilled in a double-lined cell with leachate collection. Ash proposed for some type of reuse undergoes additional testing.
- Combustion facilities are a disincentive to recycling; DEP and the Commonwealth should invest more in recycling, rather than allowing more combustion facilities to be permitted.
- The state cannot rely only on waste reduction, but needs an integrated waste management system that includes various waste management options including combustion.
- Recycling has not increased in recent years and there is no foreseeable end to Massachusetts being a net export state. The moratorium is not justified from a capacity standpoint given current and projected levels of net export and should be lifted. Environmental and public health concerns should then be addressed through the existing MEPA, site assignment and permitting processes.
- The state should not devote resources to managing capacity, which it cannot do well, and instead should focus on overseeing facilities from an environmental standpoint, which it can do better.
- DEP should obtain and run a model recently developed by the California Integrated Waste Management Board that compares the environmental impacts and benefits of combustion facilities and other solid waste management options.

Meeting Handouts

- Meeting Agenda and Discussion Questions
- Summary Notes from the October 20, 2004 SWAC Meeting
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Next SWAC Meeting

The next SWAC Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday November 16, 2004, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at DEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA.